

2015

Sustainability for typography design processes

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In the last century, the role of graphic designer has changed from mere material executor to intellectual problem solver and content-bearer.¹

The action field of graphic designers has broaden and, along with it, the influence that this profession has within companies, public administrations and citizens. Furthermore, printmakers and graphic designers have an increasing responsibility on contents dissemination but also on massive production of waste in their products, energies and materials, often toxic and with a huge impact on the environment.²

1. Noble I., Bestley R. (2011) *Visual Research: an introduction to research methodologies in Graphic Design*. Edinburgh, UK: A&C Black.

2. Dougherty, B. (2009) *Green Graphic Design*. New York, NY: Allworth Press.

3. Jedlicka W. (2009) *Sustainable Graphic Design: Tools, Systems, and Strategies for Innovative Print Design*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons Inc.

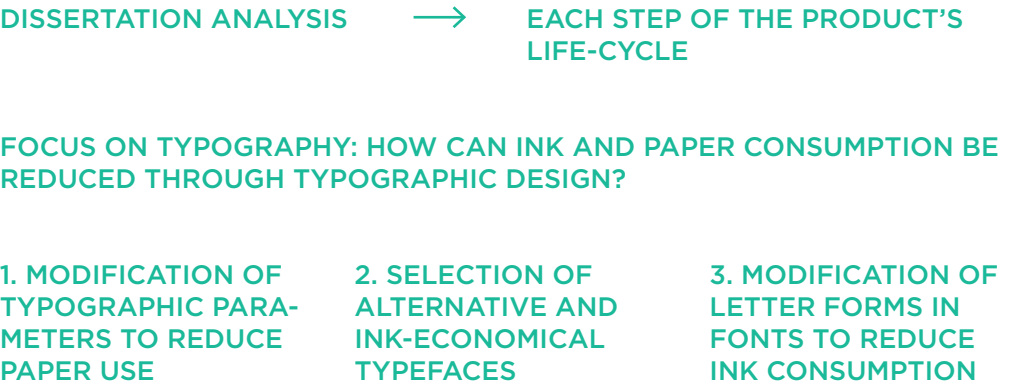
4. Munari B. (1963) *Good Design*. Mantova, Italy: Corraini Edizioni.

The decisions made during the designing phase represent a critical point in determining the impact of a product or a communication campaign during its entire life-cycle.³

It is important to understand that we cannot talk about “good design”⁴ without contemplating the environmental and social implications of every project. Sustainability is not just a check box that has to be marked, but a fundamental principle of the design process, that can give the opportunity to explore real innovative way of communication.

It is common for a graphic designer to develop the impulse to recognize and correct a wrong kerning or a confuse message. It is part of the process of learning the job and usually one ends up applying it in a subconscious way. However, when confronted with the social and environmental aspects of a communication project, many designers do not have the knowledge and the ability to do the right thing.

This dissertation aims to serve as a stimulus for graphic designers to approach the design process in a holistic way, by considering the implications of their choices to each step of the product’s life-cycle. After analysing all the stages of the designing process, the research will focus especially on typography, and investigate the effects that font choice, typographic design and page layout have on the conservation of ink and paper. Three different aspects will be examined: the modification of typographic parameters to reduce paper use, the selection of alternative and ink-economical typefaces and the modification of letter forms in fonts to reduce ink consumption while maintaining readability.



Instead of addressing problems downstream, this approach allows solving them upstream, thus highlighting the need for a global standard for the evaluation of graphic products’ sustainability. Finally sustainability will not be seen as a secondary aspect, but as a great opportunity on an ethical and professional basis, capable of facilitating the genesis of new ideas and creative solutions.



Rhyman Eco. one of the most successful sustainable fonts, developed by Grey London and Dan Rhatigan.

Silvia Barbero PhD, is assistant professor at Politecnico di Torino in the areas related to ecodesign, since 2005 she is adjunct professor of Environmental Requirements of Industrial Product at Design and Visual Communication graduate course. She had her European doctorate in Production Systems and Industrial Design at Politecnico di Torino, with an exchange with Lund University in Sweden. She is scientific coordinator of regional project (like PACK, with the involvement of territorial enterprises) and team responsible of international project (like in France, Montauban, and in Spain, Lea Artibai). She wrote numerous publications in scientific journals and she is the author of several books on international spread as Ecodesign (HF Ullmann, 2009) and Systemic Energy Networks (Lulu Enterprises, 2012). In June 2010 she founded the cultural association Plug, with the intention of bringing out the ethical aspects (social and environmental) in the world of graphic design.

Irene Stracuzzi BDes, is a freelance visual designer and photographer, based in Turin, Italy. Her visual research moves towards pure and essential shapes, as she believes that good design must always be subject to content and not to ornament. Her fields of expertise include brand identity, editorial design, typography, packaging, illustration, photography and video-making. Equipped with a classical education, she graduated in Design and Visual Communication at Politecnico di Torino in 2014, with a thesis project about the creation of a creative laboratory in which users can experiment with both traditional and innovative printmaking techniques. She is currently involved in founding and developing a start-up that will make her thesis project a reality in the city of Turin: Print Club Torino. She also collaborates with the cultural association Plug (www.plugcreativity.org), that develops projects related to social design communication and social issues, as graphic designer and photographer.